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Period ¾

Reading/ L.A. H

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**Flashback**

Every instinct told me to run to her, but I couldn’t, I stood my ground. My mother, just back from Iraq for a year, was just hit by a storage truck. I saw it happen; the truck skidding across the road, that bright white color coming closer and closer until it was too late to stop it. I wanted to go to my mother, but I couldn’t, my father was holding me back. I saw the driver’s door; crushed, my mother stuck inside, unable to escape. I realized she was unconscious and I thought she was going to die, just like many of her friends did back in Iraq.

Suddenly I was back to the time when she first left us. It was ten years ago and I was only three years old at the time. I remember I did not understand why she had to leave. She sent us letters that first year she was gone. Her writing always seemed so sad, like she hated being away from us. I wanted her to come home, but my father explained to me that she was fighting for our country, fighting for her life, fighting for us. I remember one of the letters she sent when I was almost nine very clearly. It almost broke my heart and I will never forget it.

Dear Collin and Larry,

I do not want to worry you, but there was an explosion back at the camp and we had to move out into the woods. It was too dangerous to stay where the enemy knew we were, so I am not allowed to mention my new location. I am writing to say that I will not be able to send as many letters and I will have to stay with my unit another six months. Collin, I am so sorry to miss your ninth birthday. I love you both.

All my love,

Mom

When I found out my mother was going to miss my ninth birthday, I was upset, but it wasn’t anything new. My mother had always missed my birthdays, every single one. I had never had a true “party” before because she was always away, and now, once again, she is going to miss it. We had planned a bowling party and bought a dragon piñata. My mom promised me she was going to dress up as a clown and entertain my friends. When she canceled, my dad offered to take her place, but it wasn’t going to be the same.

I couldn’t talk to my dad the way I could with my mother. When I was seven, she was deployed to Afghanistan and my dad started to have a drinking problem. At this time, I was also having problems with my friends at school. I had nobody to talk to.

That year, I had a small bullying problem. My best friend, Peter, had taken my camouflaged army truck; a gift from my mother to always remember her by. I had always kept it close to me in school because I didn’t want anybody playing with it, so when Peter took my toy, it angered me. I ripped the truck out of his hands, pushed it to the ground and screamed, “Give it back Peter! You have a mom to buy you nice things when I don’t! This is all I have!” I started crying and stormed out of the room. My teacher felt that I had some anger issues and I was sent to the guidance counselor, but the bullying only got worse. I started stealing other kid’s toys and interrupting the class almost every day. I remember eaves dropping on my father’s conversation with the principal and he explained that I had nobody to talk to, which I didn’t.

My mother was the only person that I could really open up to, but when she came home, we never had time to actually talk. Because of her tight schedule, she would only be home a few weeks at a time and was always occupied with other things besides me. However, I worked through my problems on my own, at seven years old, just a second grader.

When I opened my eyes, I saw the Jaws of Life cutting the driver’s door off the car. It was completely crushed and the red paint on the car began to chip off and my mother was slowly dragged out. Her eyes looked so cold, so lifeless, like she had passed away. I didn’t realize I was crying until a salty, cold tear slowly dripped down my face. The paramedics picked my mother up onto a gurney and rolled her away into the ambulance. I was screaming my head off and felt like I needed to kill myself. Standing on the sidelines felt so helpless, and I wanted to help her to get better. Around the car, gasoline was spread on the road and a fire had started in the engine. I could see the distinct burns all over my mother’s body. She was scratched, bruised, and the bright red burns cut deep into her soft, pale skin. When my father was talking to the paramedics, I tried to go to her, but a police man stopped me.

“I’m sorry you can’t cross here,” The officer told me.

“But she is my mother! Let me through!” I screamed back. All of a sudden, I felt my head hit the ground and everything went black.

The date was January 3, 2005, about a week before my mother was expected to be home from being away for almost two years. Wherever she was, I pictured her freezing in the bitter winter with nobody to love her. My mother would always have late night conversations with my father when she was home, and I would sneak out to listen. They didn’t talk much when I was home, but in the middle of the night around 3:00 a.m., they would talk about everything. Sometimes, I would sneak listen to their conversations. Even though there were many, this particular conversation was the most memorable.

“You can’t trust anyone out there Larry,” my mother began. “You have to look after yourself, save yourself, and do whatever is possible to stay alive.”

“Well what about Jane, Laurie, and Marie. You have known them since kindergarten,” my father announced trying to comfort her. “You know they would save you.”

“They are my closest friends, but not out in the field. There is no time to go back for others even if they are the most special to you. Your mind set is different,” she explained to him. “You have to stay alive, you must fight through,” my mother mumbled almost as to herself.

Sensing that she was uneasy about going back to Iraq in a week, my father said, “But you love fighting for your country. Isn’t it worth it?”

“Always, I love feeling the rush of running and saving our country. Sometimes, I wish I could just stay there forever.” She told him.

“Well we are not holding you back. Stay as long as you want. Fight for your dreams Kathy!” he told her.

Getting annoyed with his positive energy in this serious conversation, she screamed back, “You never help. Don’t you want me here? No of course not! If you want me to leave so badly, maybe I won’t come back next time!”

My mother was so caught up in the negatives about her job and she couldn’t see that my father was trying to help her. She grabbed her bag and stormed out of the house. At this point, I started crying and my dad tried to comfort me, but didn’t work. My mother was only home for three more days and when she didn’t come back in the morning, I felt hopeless. This was her first time being home in two years and I felt like she had forgotten about me, abandoned me, and left me to rot in the dust.

However, despite my assumptions of my mother, she came back on the last day before leaving for Iraq. She apologized to my father and I, but something was not sitting well with me. I forgave her, but in the bottom of my heart, I held a small grudge of my mother leaving and saying those terrible things to my father.

Now, as she is unconscious going to the hospital, possibly dead, I regret all those thoughts. I wish I could just tell her one more time that I loved her and am sorry for everything, but it might be too late. Time is drifting away, out of reach, out of mind, and my mother’s time is slowly running out.

I did not realize I had passed out until I woke up the next morning in the hospital. My head was spinning and I felt a bruise on the top of my forehead. My father was sitting in the chair next to my bed. He looked troubled, so I asked what happened.

“Dad, how is mom doing?” I asked eagerly.

“I’m not sure yet, she is in surgery, but will be out soon,” he replied in a shaky voice.

“Well-well is she going to be alright right?” I stuttered.

“To be honest Collin, I’m really don’t think she is—“

The doctor came into the room and announced, “Mr. Sherman, can I speak to you in the hall please.”

As my father walked out the door, I felt my heart beat with each step he took, his shod brown shoes slipping against the cold, white, concrete floor. I could barely hear the two of them through the window, just my thoughts. My heart was pounding as fast as lightening and I just kept hoping that my mother was going to be okay. Suddenly, my father approached the door. There was a concerned look in his bright green eyes. They looked as though all the life was sucked out of them and small, salty tears began to fill up in his lids.

“Dad, what happened? How’s mom?” I asked starting to get worried myself.

“Well, I don’t really know how to say it, so I’m just going to tell you,” he started off. “Your mother, she…… well…… the doctor’s did everything possible, but they couldn’t save her. I’m so sorry Collin.”

I was speechless; my mother, so strong and confident, all of a sudden just gone. There were so many thoughts running through my mind. I did not know whether to deny the fact that she was gone, express my emotion, or just stay silent.

I could not contain myself any longer. I started to scream and cry in front of the entire hospital. It wasn’t fair. My mother was a good person. She was smart, kind caring, loving, and confident and she did not deserve to die. I felt like I was going to die myself and didn’t know if I could ever get past this. My mother was my best friend, the only person who understood me, and I did not know how to live without her.

Sometimes I remember those days when my mother was alive, but now I have my own life, my own family, and we all have to move on. My mother will always hold a special place in my heart, but now I must make my own adventures, my own mistakes, and try to live in the footsteps of a brave and confident veteran. I will never forget her and I know she will always be watching over me for the rest of my life.